

Memory Box by Loui_hawk

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Summary:

The first time he saw it, he thought it was just some random wild animal. In other words, 5 times Hopper tries to figure out what or who was stealing from the memory box, and one time he met the culprit.

Memory Box

Author's Note:

Warnings:

Rated T for mild languages, and depressing, suicidal and sad theme. may trigger depression, anxiety. Contains season 1 spoilers.

Disclaimer:

I do not own Stranger Things and I do not make profits with this fic.

Writer's Note:

This fanfic will be post-Stranger Things season 1 but before season 2. It might not match with the season 2 plotlines so it's independent of season 2. This is my school homework so there might be grammatical error. And by the way, this story used the 5 stages of grief. Enjoy!

P.S. For the maximum ride, read this fic while listening to this playlist:

https://open.spotify.com/user/loui_hawk/playlist/3zct4fOvXrfRlaPiOIacHf?si=VDr2_Y3ATIG_o4t8zLjlkw

Every time the fic changes its theme, move to the next song.

1. Denial - Animal

The first time he saw it, he thought it was just some random wild animal.

It has been 3 weeks since the incident. 2 weeks since they planted the box as a memorial. 1 week since he went back and placed some Eggo waffles inside.

Hopper realised that he never really gotten to know the little girl, he's too busy doing everything to find Joyce's son. At least that's what

he told himself. During their brief meeting, he can't help to feel some weird, old, hidden emotions. For the first few days, he tried to untangle the feeling, trying to understand the abstract emotions. He would toss and turn in his bed at night, would look at her as if she's an alien from another planet. However, after he came to a realisation, he started avoiding the girl. He started pretending that she didn't exist. He now knows why he was feeling the way he does.

She looks exactly like someone he loves when she's about to die.

And being the smart guy he was, he did the best thing he can ever think of.

He ignored her, hoping that he could ignore the feeling. He didn't listen to her unless it's something informative about Will, hoping that he couldn't hear the screaming emotions inside him. He avoids looking at her, hoping that he could be blinded from the memories. He even started to wish that they have never met.

But people always say, be careful what you wish for.

He can still remember the exact moment he found out that the girl is gone. He can still remember the black spot where Mike told him she had disappeared. He can still remember the painfully empty eyes Mike had for a long period of time. He can still feel the guilt of ever hoping they have never met. He can now feel the pain familiar to the pain he felt a few years back, even though he never gets close to the girl. He now realised she doesn't need to do anything to make him fond of her.

But he knows it's too late, he needs to be strong.

For Joyce.

For Mike.

For Eleven.

A week after the incident, the group went into the forest. They agreed to make a memorial for the sacrifice that El has made for them. They agreed to plant a beautiful wooden box in the middle of the forest. They agreed that if they want to give something to El, they

would put it inside the box.

They didn't agree on who and when will someone put something inside the box.

Hopper realised this. For the next few days, every time he went back from his shift, he would purposefully go pass the wooden box. He can always see that no one has come to put something inside the box. He's actually very surprised that Mike didn't put anything inside the box. He later found out from Karen, Mike's mother, that Mike doesn't want to come near to the box. He doesn't even want to talk about the girl.

After a week of checking on the box, he finally couldn't take it anymore. He went to Bradley's Big Guy supermarket and buy 2 packs of Eggo waffles, a food that he remembers she likes. He heated it then quickly went back to the box and put both of the waffle packs inside.

"Hey kid, I remember you telling Mike that you really like this stuff. You really need to eat something healthier... If you were here, I would probably be forcing you to eat some vegetables." Jim joked to himself. He could feel some tears building in his eyes, but he tried to keep himself collected.

"I...Look kid, I'm really sorry that I couldn't protect you from that hell of a creature. I am also sorry that I mostly ignored you when you were here. It's just that, you really reminded me of someone I used to know... and it really hurts you know? I know it's not fair to you but..." He suddenly cut himself when he feels the tears start rolling and started to laugh.

"Look at me. Isn't it pathetic? I'm talking to myself in front of a box with waffles in it... what has this become?" Jim keeps laughing and crying as he kneels in front of the box.

He stays where he was for a very long time before standing up and start walking back to his house.

He didn't come near the box for the next 7 days. He didn't want to be reminded that he was a very pathetic man. He's the head chief of Hawkins for god sake! He tried to bury himself in work for day and

night but, every now and then, he couldn't help to be reminded of the girl. At the end, he started to think of some silly reason of why should he come back to the box.

'I left food inside the box, someone would have to tidy it up or it would just become molten and dirty'

And with that thought, the Chief went back to the memory box. What he found there, however, was a bit surprising.

The box is closed, just like when he left it. But when he opened the box, all the waffles are gone. What's left is just some crumble and the waffles packaging. He was very surprised with this finding, and started to look around the box. He found nothing out of the ordinary.

"Stupid animal... sorry El, I would have to buy you some more eggo then." Jim announced to nobody. He quickly picks up the packaging and tidies up the food crumble. He had thought it was good, that some animal is eating the waffles, so he doesn't waste any food.

But he equipped the box with a lock the next day anyway.

2. Anger - Stranger

After he installed the lock on the box, he put some more waffles inside.

"Here you go El, another pack of waffles for you. Don't let the animals steal it again now." Hopper sat in front of the box for quite a long time. He realised that it's very cold, sitting in the middle of a winter storm, but he found himself not caring. He sat there, remembering the upside down, remembering El, remembering... her.

"El, I... I want you to know why I have been really cold to you this whole time. I know that my reason will sound silly to you and that it doesn't deserve your forgiveness. Hell, I don't even want your forgiveness." Hopper drew a big breath. "A long time ago, I met the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. She was the kindest, purest, the most patient girl I have ever met. If she was here, I bet the both of you would be really close. Both of your personality are very similar."

Jim let out a small smile.

"In fact, if she was here right now... she would be around your age." He stopped talking for a very long time after that.

After a while, he locks the box and went back home. He didn't want to admit it, but he just wants a reason to keep coming back. He knows that his reason is simply absurd, but he's desperate for it. He wanted to come back. He needs to come back.

So, the next time he came back, 2 days after he left, he was actually angry with what he has found.

The box was open, with the lock sitting right next to it. Again, all he could find inside is waffle crumbs and it's packaging. He quickly walks around the box looking for a clue of who might have been the culprit. He was furious.

"You've got to be kidding me! Who would take stuff from a memory box?! Who does that?!" Jim screamed when he couldn't find any clue. He quickly went to the nearest tree and started to punch the tree.

He knows that he wasn't mad at the culprit, not really. He knows he was mad at himself, for being vulnerable, for getting too close, for not being able to protect her. He knows deep down that everything that happens to the girl, to his girl, it was all his fault. He's like a black hole, he sucks everything that gets too close to him and destroys them. He is a black hole, he is poison.

He kept on punching even though he can see the blood, He kept on punching until he can see the sapwood, he kept on punching and punching and punching until the storm inside him started to ease.

His breath was shallow when he stops punching. He could feel the tears in his eyes building, but he keeps it in. He stands straightly and took a deep breath. He looks at the box and there was only one thought in his mind.

'I'm going to catch this son of a bitch.'

3. Bargaining - Friend

The very next day, he went to Hunting & Camping for some human-sized tree spring trap. He also went back to the supermarket to buy more Eggo. After he finishes his shift, he quickly went back to the box and started to prepare the trap. He then went into hiding after he puts the waffles inside the box and locks it.

He waited around 15 minutes...

And another 30 minutes...

Then another 1 hour...

Till another 2 hours...

"AHHHH" a boyish scream can be heard from across the forest.

"Ah, finally I managed... Dustin?" Asked Hopper when he saw the little boy hanging upside down from the tree.

"Chief Hopper?!? What the hell Chief, get me out of here!!!" The boy struggles trying to untangle the knots on his left foot. The Chief quickly walk towards the boy and started to release him.

"So, It's you this whole time? You're the one who has been stealing the waffles inside the box? Seriously kid I thought you were better than that." Hopper scolded the poor boy while he tried to untie him.

"Wait, wait, wait, what? Chief what are you talking about? This is the first time I even got close to the box! And how the hell would I be able to unlock the box?" Dustin asked confused.

"You know how to unlock a lock, Dustin. I saw you did it when you were caught stealing chocolate pudding remember?" The Chief said with a knowing face. The boy just looked at him with a guilty smile.

"Okay, I admit I can open the lock but still! I swear I never got near to the box ever since we planted it. By the way, why is it locked anyway? why are you even here?" Dustin asked curiously.

"Well, I was just passing by..." Jim mumbles, trying to avoid Dustin's suspicious gaze.

“Then how do you know that there’s Eggos inside the box?” Dustin grinned. The boy realises that Hopper actually cares for the girl, he’s not blind. Even though the chief never shows it, he always has a soft spot for the abandoned child. Dustin watched painfully as the chief stutters, trying to make another excuse. Everybody in the town knows about the tragic story of the Hopper’s family. Everybody in town knows how Hopper stops being the caring father figure he was. Nobody in town, however, was brave enough to confront him about it. Until now.

“It’s okay chief, soft feelings here and there would be healthy for you anyway.” Teased Dustin. He tried not to laugh at the chief red face.

“And what do you mean by that? You’re delusional kid, you need sleep. Run along now.” Jim tried to sound intimidating, but by the look Dustin gave him, he knows that he has failed spectacularly.

“Chief Hopper, no offense but, you’re a shit liar.” The boy exclaimed. He was about to sit on the box when he saw the chief unconsciously glared at him. He quickly stands back up while giving the chief a cheeky grin. “See? I’m not even allowed to sit in the box.”

“I didn’t say anything about not sitting on the box...” Hopper saw the boy left eyebrow went up. “Okay. Maybe I do care a little bit about the girl.” Dustin’s left eyebrow almost went lost in his own hair. “Maybe not a little...”

“Well, at least we are making some progress!” Dustin cuts the chief before he is able to explain himself. “Seriously chief, It’s not a sin to care for someone. You need to chill and think about it. Why are you hiding it anyway?” The boy can see that the chief is trying to answer his question.

“A, a,aaaa... You don’t have to answer that to me if you haven’t figured it out yourself yet. I need to get going anyway soooo, don’t forget to think about it! Bye!” Dustin said as he walks away towards Lucas’s house happily. He knows that the chief would listen to what he said. He knows that no matter what, Hopper will come to a realisation one day.

‘But in the meantime,’ Dustin thought. ‘it’s time to play some

Dungeons & Dragons.'

4. Depression - Ghost

He can hear it loud and clear.

"Papa..."

"Daddy..."

"No papa..."

"Make it stop daddy..."

Jim toss and turn on his bed, dreaming about Eleven and her simultaneously. It doesn't feel like a dream really, more like a trip down the memory lane.

"No papa, let me go!"

"Daddy, you have to let me go..."

He can see El trying to break out of her Papa's grip. He can see his girl trying to fight her demons. He can hear El whimpering and screaming in pain. He can hear his girl asking him permission to leave. He tried to help. He tried to help them both. But whatever he tried, he can't do anything except to watch. He couldn't reach them, they couldn't see him. He couldn't touch them, they couldn't hear him.

"Don't worry girls, I will help you!" Hopper yelled desperately, trying to reach them. But whatever he does, they never noticed him.

He kept on yelling and reaching and crying until suddenly, both of the girls seemed to notice him at the same time.

"Daddy..."

Both of them said simultaneously, looking straight into his eyes. They

looked freakishly the same. Jim could see the look in their eyes clearly. They were full of grief, sadness, rage,

And disappointment.

“Why didn't you save us?”

“Why did you sent us away?”

“Why did you ignore us?”

“Why?”

“Why???”

“WHY?!?!?”

Jim jumped up from his bed, suddenly sitting very straightly. His skin was very sweaty, his breath was shallow, his eyes couldn't stop the tears from coming out. His whole body was shaking, his chest felt like it had been crashed with a bulldozer over and over again, his head is full of thoughts and memories of the nightmare he just had. He can still hear the sound of the children, asking him the same question over and over again.

He put his hand over his eyes, trying to stop the tears. He tried to take a couple of deep breaths, trying to stop his racing heart. He tensed the muscle all over his body, trying to stop the shaking. He kept on doing it over and over again. Yet he didn't try to stop the chanting in his head. He knows that whatever he tried to do, it just won't stop. The word 'why' would keep replaying in his head over and over again.

So he screamed.

He ran as fast as he could. He didn't care if he's running barefooted. He didn't care if he's running into the forest wearing a t-shirt and shorts. He didn't care if it was in the middle of a winter night. He ran towards the box as if his life depends on it. Yet he was frozen in place a few meters from the box when he reaches the location.

He can see the box, opened and empty even though he had just filled

it that morning.

He can see a person standing beside the box, looking at him with its eyes.

The same eyes in his nightmare.

Eleven's eyes.

"I told you I was sorry! What else do you want from me?!" Jim yelled at the figure. She didn't say anything, didn't move a muscle.

"I know I've been a bastard towards you! I know I'm not fair to you! And now I just can't stop thinking about you!" He kept on screaming.

"Why can't you leave me in peace? Why did you keep on haunting me?! I have enough torture of feeling guilty! I have enough torture feeling like I've failed you, just like how I've failed my daughter!" This time, he can see the girl tilted her head as if confused.

He can feel his feet getting frozen. He can feel his tears running down his face like a waterfall. But he didn't care. He's too busy screaming at the ghost in his mind.

"I couldn't save you from that monster. Just like how I couldn't save my daughter from Cancer! I'm not good enough, not strong enough and I know it! Why do you need to remind me every second of my life? I didn't deserve this!!!"

"Just go away !!!" He screamed at the top of his lungs

He blinked once, and then she's gone.

He falls on to his knees from exhaustion, the cold started to creep in. His body begin to shake now that the adrenaline started to leave his body. His tears however, keeps on going down across his face.

He stays frozen like that for a long time before he collapsed onto the snow, his body and brain are too tired to function.

A small voice in his head told him that he couldn't stay there, he'll die from hypothermia.

But he found himself didn't care.

'Good'

That was the last thing that he thought of before the darkness consumed him.

5. Acceptance - Her

He didn't think that he would wake up.

He didn't expect to feel warm either.

He slowly opens his eyes, finding that he's covered by a blanket. He didn't remember bringing it, now that he thinks about it, he didn't even recognise it.

Looking around, he saw footprints leading to the box. He slowly pick himself up and walked slowly towards it. His can feel his whole body protesting against the movement, but he didn't care. He starts to examine the box's surrounding and realise that the footprints doesn't belong to him or Dustin's. As a matter of fact, it looks like a child's footprint because it looks like he/she didn't have a big foot.

He cautiously opens the box to find a couple of waffles inside. He would have thought that it was the waffles he left yesterday if it wasn't for the steam coming out of it. He slowly pick the waffles up, trying to not burn his hand, and found a small ripped paper underneath. He noticed a messy handwriting on it, so he pick it up as well.

'Food. Eat.' he read.

He tried to make sense of it all but he's too tired to think. So he started to eat the warm waffles. He can feel the heat from the food transfers into his body. He can feel his brain slowly starts to work again. So he started to think.

He thinks about the past couple of weeks since the accident.

He thinks about all the emotions he used to hide.

He thinks about what Dustin had told him.

He thinks about his loveable daughter.

He thinks about El.

He finished his food and started to tidy things up. He knows that he's freezing, but the blanket really help him out. He slowly went back home to take a shower. He went to his kitchen and took the leftover waffles he bought from yesterday. Then he went back to the box.

Now he knows what to do.

Now he knows.

1. Meeting - El

Eleven never actually leave, she has always been there the whole time hiding in the bushes or behind a tree. She heard everything Hopper 'technically' told her, and she was always curious with who was the Chief referring to when he said 'her'. At first, she thought that the Chief knows that she was there, why else would he bring more waffles almost everyday? But the more she listen to him, she realised that he thinks she is dead.

She can feel his pain just from listening to his voice, and at first, she was confused. She realised that throughout their past interactions, he was very cold and professional towards her. Sometimes she could almost see her papa inside him. But after listening to most of Jim's stories, she knows that it is not his fault and more importantly, it is not her fault also.

She continued doing what she has been doing, listening to the Chief story from the bushes and comes out when he left. It almost became a daily routine for the both of them.

Until last night.

She never expected that the chief would come outside in the middle of a snow storm. So when she saw him, she freezes.

She listen to his yelling, but she didn't move a muscle. She let him continue to rant until she heard him say :

“I have enough torture feeling like I've failed you, just like how I've failed my daughter!”“

She moved her head and looked into the man's eyes.

“I couldn't save you from that monster. Just like how I couldn't save my daughter from cancer!”

Now everything make sense to her.

Now she understands.

“Just go away !!!” He screamed.

And so she did.

She didn't left for long though. She went to the supermarket to steal a couple of Eggos and heat it. As she walks out of the store, she could see a nice big blanket on a selling shelf.

So she took it.

When she was back, it is almost sunrise. she could see the man sleeping on the snow, right where he stands before she left him. She quickly walked towards him and cover him with the blanket. She can feel that he's freezing, so she did her best to cover him. After that, she walked towards the box and put the waffles and a small notes she that had wrote in it. She quickly left the men alone, taking her daily morning stroll around the woods.

When she came back, the man is long gone, and the waffles had been replaced with a new one.

Or so she thought.

She walks towards the box as usual and open the box when...

“You do know that everyone is very worried about you right?” A man voice startled her. She quickly turns around and out on her defensive pose.

“Hey, hey, no need to be defensive all of the sudden. You are the one who has been stealing all of the waffles, not me.” Joked Hopper lightly. El slowly relaxed her muscles and put her arms back next to her body. Jim smiled slightly at the sight.

“You know kid, you can save this old man a lot of pain if you just come out from the beginning.” He said, slowly walking towards the girl.

“Let me make you a deal. I have a spare room at my bunker that you can use all for yourself. In return, you will stop stealing stuff, like this blanket, from strangers. It’s not a good thing to do. Deal?” Hopper said holding his hands for a handshake. Eleven just looked at the hand with confusion. Jim realised this.

“If you agree with me, you hold my hand. It’s called a handshake.” He explains. El nods and slowly moves her hand into the chief grips.

“Let’s go back.” Hopper said leading the girl towards his house, but the girl wouldn’t move. He looked at her questioningly.

“Daughter. Name.” She said.

The Chief just smiled and said “So you have been listening to what I said this whole time.”

Both of them stay silent until Hopper answer,

“Sarah, her name was Sarah”

And they both smiled.

Author's Note:

Sooo what do you think guys? This is my first seriously written fanfic because it’s for school XD. It was supposed to be a 500 words fanfic but I went a little bit overboard XD. Please leave a comment

guys!!! Thanks for reading ❤️📖